

STATE SCHOOL BOOKS

A STATEMENT FROM THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY.

Gross Amount of the Business, Prices and Other Information.

PORTLAND, Or., May 27.—(To the Editor.)—Much has been published of late regarding the American Book Company and the cost of school books furnished by that company to the people of Oregon. Interested persons have persistently circulated misstatements. I feel that the public should be told the truth, and, therefore, beg space in your paper for the following brief statement, which may throw some light upon the much-mooted and grossly misrepresented text-book question.

The American Book Company invites the closest investigation of the school-book question, knowing that every person who investigates candidly and without prejudice will be convinced that it has dealt with the people of Oregon in a straightforward, business way, and that it has endeavored to serve the people faithfully and to promote the best interests of their schools. We could not hope to retain the goodwill and business of the people in any other way. We obtained our contract four years ago against heavy competition, and the prices of our publications were as low, if not lower, than those of any other concern offering standard text-books to this state.

The official records show that there were about 100,000 pupils enrolled in Oregon in 1917. Our total sales of books of all kinds in Oregon during the year 1917, including all books sold to dealers, private schools, colleges, academies, pedagogical works and miscellaneous books, as well as all books for public schools, including high schools, were \$1,911,493. Of this amount \$1,668,222 was for books for the public schools. More than one-half of these books were purchased by the people at catalogue prices, and the balance at the dealers' contract retail prices—10 per cent above list—so that the total amount paid by the people for the books could not exceed \$1,794,853. Therefore, the total cost of the books to the people was less than 50 cents per pupil attended school, and the total amount received by us for the same was less than 43 cents per pupil. These are actual figures. They demonstrate that the cost of school books in Oregon is not excessive. They also show the utter absurdity of the statements published by some of our more ignorant detractors, that our annual business in Oregon amounts to \$500,000 and that we sell books amounting to \$1,000,000 a year in the city of Portland. There are but two states in the Union (Arkansas and Alabama) where the cost of school books per pupil is less than in Oregon.

Enemies of the American Book Company are attempting to confuse the public mind by publishing tables of the cost of books in other states, purchase contracts, price systems, and comparing them with the retail or highest prices at which books are sold for use in the public schools. In this state we may be sold by the retail dealers, the net wholesale contract price in Chicago or New York (which is uniform to all states) is taken as a basis of comparison with the maximum retail price allowed by the production or by the manufacturer of the books, and, disregarding the relative merit of the books, the cost of a worthless or inferior book used in some states is compared with the price of a standard book used in this state. It is a well-known law of production and sale that an article can be purchased at a less figure at first cost from the manufacturer at the place of production or from a wholesaler at some place removed thousands of miles and when sold at retail, the cost of transportation must be added to the cost of manufacture, and the profit made by the middleman or retailer.

Our assailants have asserted that Idaho purchases our school publications cheaper than does the state of Oregon. This is not true in fact. The cost of the books at the school books from the retail dealers in their several localities. In Idaho the state purchases the books in bulk in Chicago at the net wholesale contract price, and pays the freight from Chicago to Idaho and the additional expenses of handling and distributing the books to the various school districts as they may be required. If the amounts paid by Idaho for freights and other expenses in distributing the books be added to the prices paid for the books in Chicago, it will be found that the books actually cost the people of Idaho more than they do the people of Oregon. The total cost of school books in Oregon last year, as shown above, was less than 50 cents per pupil. The total year paid for its school books in 1916 was more than \$16,000, not counting freight or expenses of distribution. Their school enrollment was about 20,000 pupils. Therefore, their school books cost them at Chicago more than 75 cents per pupil. Freight and expenses of distribution make the total cost still greater. The maximum discount from the trade list of publishers received by Idaho (the books being delivered in Chicago) is 20 per cent. In Oregon the discount to the retail dealers (we deliver the books in Oregon), is 10 per cent from the list. The cost of freights and distribution, in fact, exceeds the difference between these discounts, and we would make a larger profit on our Oregon business if the state bought the books from us at our wholesale prices in the East, and shipped and distributed them at its own expense, as Idaho does, than we make in Oregon under the present system. In Idaho the state purchases the books in Chicago at a price 20 per cent above the price per

cent from the list, and the books are paid for out of a special fund and reimbursed by each school district out of the general school fund. The districts furnish the books to the pupils free. The cost of freights and distribution is paid by the school districts, from their school apportionment. The system is so complete, and that it is impossible to ascertain exactly the total cost of the books delivered to the pupils. Since the new text-book law went into effect in Idaho, in 1913, the consumption of books has increased nearly 100 per cent. There is much greater waste of books under the free text-book system than where the books are purchased and owned by the pupils, as in Oregon. It is a case, in Idaho, of getting something for nothing and there is always extravagance where some one else, generally the taxpayer, pays the bill.

It has been stated that the contract retail prices of school books in Oregon (that is, the maximum prices which are charged by the retail dealers) are 10 per cent above the catalogue or list prices. This is true of most of the books. It is true that the books of the American Book Company for standard text-books at the adoption four years ago provided for this same profit to the retail dealer. The law of Oregon imposes conditions on the publisher which are not required by the law of any other state. It requires the contracting publisher to maintain a general depository place of business in this state, and to maintain subdepositories in other parts throughout the state (now more than 250) as may be from time to time designated by the state board of education. We are therefore required to keep on sale and on consignment in various parts of the state large numbers of books, amounting to thousands of dollars. A number of these places are remote from railroads, the freight in many cases costing as much as 15 per cent. The contract requires that the books shall be sold at uniform prices at every place in the state, and in order to do this and to place all sections of the state and all dealers on an equal footing, we are obliged to pay this cost of transportation, supply large stocks of books, which there may be no demand, and which are ultimately returned at our expense, and in a damaged condition, the loss falling upon us. The retail prices specified in the contract are the maximum prices allowed to be charged by the retail dealers for the books. In many places in the state and at Portland the books are sold at retail at catalogue prices. We also mail the books in retail, postage prepaid, to any point in the state, at the catalogue prices.

Our opponents are rival publishers, houses, or their agents or their partisans. Their only object is to bring about a change of text-books. We ask in all places where a change should be made. A change in publishing houses would in no way lessen taxes or effect any saving to the people, because the prices of all standard text-books are alike. It would not benefit the schools, because our publications must be conceded to equal in educational merit those of any other publisher. Common business prudence and economy require a uniform series of books adopted for definite periods. In no other way can favorable prices be secured or the people be protected from frequent and expensive changes. Our books are in use in the schools of the state. Large numbers of them, amounting to many thousands of dollars, are the property of the school patrons. These would become valueless if a change were made. It is manifestly folly to suggest a change on the ground of economy. Let us consider what a change of text-books means. For example, 20 per cent, or 20,000, pupils in Oregon are in the grade that use a "First Reader." If a change were made, the people would necessarily have to purchase 20,000 of the new "First Readers." No standard "First Reader" is sold at 4 than 20 cents, most of them at 25 cents. In other words, it would cost not less than \$5000 to buy a supply of new "First Readers" alone. Our sales books for 1917 and 1918 show that we have sold annually but 6000 "First Readers" in Oregon, which at a retail price of 25 cents would be but \$1500. In fact, a large percentage of these books were sold at the catalogue price—25 cents. "First Readers," therefore, cost the people of Oregon less than \$1500 per year, while it would cost at least \$5000 to buy a supply of a new kind. An sale of 6000 as against 20,000 "First Readers" in one year practically means a reduction of these books but once in five years. The same readers serving five successive classes at a nominal cost to the pupil after first purchase. Again, 40 per cent of 17,000 pupils in the public schools study geography. There are two books in use. These would, therefore, be 40,000 pupils in these classes, one-half in the elementary and one-half in the advanced book. Twenty thousand pupils purchasing an elementary geography, if a new book were introduced displacing the one now in use, at 60 cents per copy, which is the price of all standard geographies, regardless of the publisher, would cost the state \$12,000. Yet the annual sale of "Monteith's Elementary Geography," the book now used in our schools throughout the state, is but 4000 copies, costing \$12,000. If space permitted we would go through the list of books in use and show exactly what the expense of a change of text-books would be. The total would amount to not less than \$100,000. That is the sum the people of Oregon would have to pay out for books the first year if the text-books were changed. Under the present system the annual cost of books is less than \$18,000. The sales of text-books in this state are normal. The books have been in use for a number of years, the people are well supplied, and the sales each year are only to fill in and renew books actually worn out in the schools.

These figures prove the saving to the people by continuing in the books they have on hand. The conditions now are similar to those existing four years ago when the present books were adopted. The public then almost unanimously opposed a change. They did not want to pay the expense of text-books would involve. R. L. EDWARDS, General Agent American Book Co.

United States Land Office, Oregon City, Oregon, March 23, 1918.—Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1917, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1912.

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Our Guns are cocked and primed

The first victory is ours,

Old Glory is flung to the breeze and every patriot rejoice.

But in the meantime business must go ahead, and we desire state to the people of Tillamook County, that

We have the largest stock of clothing.

We have the latest patterns in clothing.

We have the best grades of clothing.

We have the largest line of shoes and hats.

We have the latest styles in shoes and hats.

And in the line of furnishing goods, we have anything you want.

Others may puff and blow, and sell their old style goods, but we are selling more in our line than all our competitors in the County combined, and with a guarantee with every sale.

J. A. Todd & Co.

Clothiers & Furnishers,

TILLAMOOK, OREGON.

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